DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 071 550 **HE 003 675**

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TITLE	Meal Plans.
PUB DATE	72
NOTE	24p.; Speech presented at the Conference of the Association of College and University Housing Officers, Kansas State University, 1972
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*College Students; *Dining Facilities; *Food Service; *Food Service Industry; *Higher Education

ABSTRACT

Changing life styles for college students are causing food service directors to change their ways of serving students. Students today seem to prefer living in privately owned apartments and houses where they can provide and cook their own food to living on campus and having meals prepared for them. Many colleges and universities are eliminating required board fees that students have protested as being unfair. This paper presents some alternatives that have been instituted at several campuses to the traditional meal plans. These plans include short-order types of eating facilities rather than cafeterias and dining halls, and meal plans in which the student would pay for any 15 or 20 meals per week that he might choose to eat. (HS)

ED 071550

ACUHO CONFERENCE 1972
MEAL PLANS
JOHN T. PENCE
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

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I

Miss Riggs asked me almost six months ago to be on a panel regarding meal plan options. After some hesitation I consented to present information based on what our industry has done, is trying to do, and what to expect in the future. I began this task by reviewing some sixty letters from food service directors or housing officers. Several of their opening statements are as follows:

> I do not envy your task as I am sure there are as many meal plans and options as there are colleges, or You have undertaken quite a task and I wish you perserverance to its conclusion!

The conclusion is here and let me share with you some of my resource material and findings.

A high tide of change is rolling across American college campuses, sweeping away many old issues and leaving students in a fresh mood. This new course appears to be away from confrontation and violence and toward some kind of working arrangement with the world outside college walls. Students seem to be reassessing the value of universities and their traditions, and finding them not so bad, after all. They are becoming more unregimented, individualistic, and price conscious. Changing student society is being influenced by trends toward personalization, reactions against complexity, anti-materialism and more imput in the university decision making process.

It's all quiet on the university campuses these days. Students are serious again and they are more willing to work through established channels to make the changes they want. Student goals are shifting, too, resulting in revised courses of study. Living conditions are different, and a relaxed code of personal conduct is in vogue. Dormitories, even with relaxed rules, are not as popular at many schools as private apartments off campus, communes and other cooperative adventures in living. University housing and food services must

translate this changing student society into its products and services if they are to survive. Student needs and satisfaction must be fulfilled to increase student participation in the use of university living and dining facilities.

According to the USDA, college and universities comprise the largest segment of the institutional feeding industry accounting for more than one-third of the volume.

College food services are feeding students for less than three dollars per day per student and in some cases, as is Kansas State University, for less than two dollars, a rather healthy performance record. Statistics don't feed students. Eating preferences have been changing along with life styles.

William Myers, past president of NACUFS, stated that as food service professionals we should set our sights during the coming year to "finding newer and better ways to meet the changing needs of students".

To meet changing student life styles and eating habits a number of options for college student food plans have appeared across the nation. Compulsory board and room contracts for resident students are being required by fewer colleges and universities each year. The trend is towards the resident student paying only for the food he eats. Breakfasts are skipped during a period in time when the USDA is pouring millions into our future students now being served by elementary and secondary school breakfast programs. The mobility of our society has created students leaving on week-ends.

There has been a great deal of resident student interest in having greater flexibility in meal plan options. Students are applying pressure on university officials for new food plans as they move away from served meals and toward fast short order service. Most students aren't interested in their own nutritional welfare but it is a known fact that it is hard to teach a hungry student.

To insure a higher level of occupancy in residence halls, college food service directors are having to offer meal plan contracts, i.e. 10, 14, 15 meals per week to the extent of no board contract at all.

A 1971 report of Policy and Procedures Committee of the National Association of College and University Food Services stated the greatest potential or most fatal problems in the next ten years and actions to be taken are:

Problem	Action to be taken
1. Failure to recognize the changing life style of the customer showing up in -	
a. Elimination of board plans	Develop plans to phase out of contract into cash operation; as well as interim progress when both types of meal plans may be offered. Establish sound practices and controls as though dining halls were a commercial operation.
b. Trend toward co-ed living and replacement of traditional residence halls with apartment facilities.	Dramatize, through actual comparison, what the student is receiving on full board against what he could expect to pay on an a la carte basis, realizing that even with kitchen facilities they are not going to cook every meal.
c. All day meal service.	Analyze and compare costs - costs may be less with fewer cafeteria lines and more balanced production needs.

The residence hall, providing daily meals to students living there, is affected in many ways, but chiefly financially, by the eating habits or meal participation of the students. Reliable data is needed in order to set realistic prices for board in college feeding programs. There is no evidence of material available to determine the patterns of meal participation and their effects on the cost aspects of feeding.

II

Topics such as food plans, food options are always discussed at National College and University Food Service Association meetings as well as National Housing Officer meetings.

At a midwest regional NACUFS meeting there were as many different food option plans in effect as there were schools represented at the meeting. No one seemed to be completely satisfied with the status quo in any one institution.

A summary of 116 replies from ACUHO schools this year showed 51% of the schools having only one contract option, 23% having two options, 24% three or more options and 2% having no contracts.

Sixty percent of the food service directors were satisfied with their contract plan while 19% believed more options should be offered.

Some comments from food service or housing directors serving the 19, 20, or 21 meal plan only:

> Flexible meal plans would cause costs to escalate, and therefore be less attractive to students.
>
> We firmly believe that no school can operate without subsidy unless they impose compulsory board contract on most of the students living in the residence halls.

Contract feeding plan is much better for students economically and from the standpoint of providing them with nutritionally adequate diets.

The single no option meal plan is the one which best meets the over-all needs for residence hall food service on our campus.

Our studies seem to reveal that the differential in costs to students for optional plans (less than 20 meals/week) is of an amount of such little difference that students would gain little if anything in cost for food service.

The 20 meal plan option is no doubt the best for the student but he should be offered other options.

It is great without options.

Basic board contract is still the best arrangement for student and the food service.

At this time the 20 meal contract is a good plan.

Single option plan is more efficient for our food service and students reasonably satisfied.

With 20 meal plan we can best serve maximum number of residents for least cost.

We don't offer options and feel fine about it.

Some comments from food service or housing directors who have branched out from the traditional 20 meal plan and are offering other options.

We initiated a 15 meal/week contract this year and the advantages appear to be some improvement in student satisfaction.

We feel that offering options has resulted in a certain amount of good will which hopefully, has helped and will continue to help to keep the residence halls more fully occupied.

Students like options. Food service has problems administering.

More options will probably be required in the future.

The more options, the more the problem.

Students like systems with 10 meal plan contract.

Provide a reasonable variety of options yet continue solvent food services.

After going to 15 meal plan along with 20 meal plan, 70% of students still took 20 meal plan.

When you have too many food plans one doesn't have the advantages of pre-planning.

Will never go to more than two options -- students loose meal tickets and want to change contract plans.

Cash wise, the program of meal coupons that includes transferability is more than our previously controlled meal system.

Too many variables for student to change plans frequently.

We still require freshmen to participate in either a 20 or 14 meal plan option.

The most important thing is that whatever plan it may be -- income must not be decreased.

When considering new food plans go carefully and limit your liability if you guess wrong.

Would still prefer flat 20 meal contracts.

Created financial problems.

Optional contract plan is a failure.

19-21 Meal Plan Option

Advantages	Disadvantages
Low cost per meal offered	Each student pays the same regardless of amount of meals eaten.
Balanced diet	Less student satisfaction.
Allows for special meals	Lower degree of flexibility
Seconds available	Less absenteeism than a la carte plan
Pre-planned production	Students don't want to pay for weeks' meals in advance.
Lower costs	Can't take food out.
Fixed income	Can't eat out as often because have pre-paid for all meals and double expense.
Most profitable	No adjustments for going home weekends.
Few problems in handling student accounts	Lack of selection of foods.
	Penalizes students with irregular schedules.

5, 10, 14, 15, Meal Options

Advantages	Disadvantages
When going to a 5 day a week plan, can close dining halls on weekends and reduce costs.	Increased amount of surveillance needed.
Increases student satisfaction.	More meal ticket infractions.
Reduces waste, students take what they want.	Reduced income.
Reduce labor a. Extended serving hours.	Increased food take-out.
Meet needs of students who don't eat every meal and desire less regimentation.	Greater administrative expense.

Charge Plan

Advantages	Disadvantages
Student who is broke can eat.	Sophisticated billing procedure necessary.
Parents assured money goes for food.	
Student satisfaction.	

Cash -- A-La-Carte Plan

Advantages	Disadvantages
Wider menu selection	Eliminates free seconds
Reduces waste	Less income
Meal ticket coupons transferrable	Can't pre-plan production (food, labor)
Provides education experience in budgeting.	Pricing policies
Minimize pilferage and freeloading.	More menu planning
Each person pays their fair share.	
Student satisfaction.	
Obtain off campus students for meal participation.	

The University of Tennessee uses a charge-plate plan. This allows the students-who are often broke-to charge the food eaten which is an inducement to eat in the university dining halls.

At Cornell University, students can use their meal-ticket coupons or charge-plates to eat in the student unions, residence hall dining rooms, from a food catering truck traveling the campus or to purchase raw food at the campus grocery. The University also has available a voluntary co-op dining plan which allows continuous meal service throughout the day. A membership fee is charged, and some specials are provided for co-op members. The co-op diners can further ~~chose~~ choose one of four options (5 day or 7 day).

The University of Iowa has found that effective meal transfer program continues the guaranteed income yet it gives the students some flexibility in dining which they request.

The University of the Pacific closed down unprofitable operations and extended student "free-flo" to student centers for food service. The student can dine at the residence halls or at the snack bars. This allows for more flexibility in meal hours, and a more **varied** menu selection each day for the student.

At the University of Wisconsin independent co-ops undercut university residence halls around $300.00 a year. This was accomplished by students working to fix meals, cleaning ~~clean~~ their quarters and eliminating the supervisory personnel.

Kent State University instigated Continuious Feeding (6:45 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.) for board students. Students permitted to eat three times per day.

In Oklahoma City the University closed the food service in a new residence hall, and students now share the food service in another residence hall which had not been used to full capacity.

At the University of Kansas, dormitories are only 83 % occupied, and the University is trying to attract students with promises of single rooms, options on furniture and painting, and new choices of food served at different hours.

The University of Santa Barbara experimented with as many as ten different options and plans but have narrowed down to offering two plans to residents, 20 meals and 13 meals per week and three meals only contracts to off campus students.

Housing and Food Service Directors are fearing the loss of their guaranteed income from board contracts and are attempting to make the idea of living in

residence halls as attractive as possible.

The problem which faces many college food service directors is what type of board system would be the most mutually satisfying to students and administration. What system would allow the student the greatest freedom while fulfilling the needs of management in operating at the optimum degree of efficiency?

The variable meal plan was designed to preserve the advantages of the contract concept of food service with flexibility for students to determine to a greater extent their own eating patterns.

Factors to consider in determining the feasibility of optional food service plans:

1. Geographic considerations:
   a. Overall size of campus
   b. Location of residence halls and dining halls
   c. Location of academic buildings

2. Cost ratio:
   a. Food
   b. Labor
   c. Fixed expenses
      1. Debt service
      2. Overhead charges

3. Competitive offerings for housing and food service:
   a. Apartments
   b. Scholarship houses
   c. Private residence halls
   d. Greek houses

Schools have experienced deficit years resulting from inability to determine absolute meal participation and therefore, inaccuracy in setting rates. One can see from the recent ACUHO study that there is quite a variable in costs of the various plans at colleges and universities. This study indicates that accurate meal census data, adequate planning, time, and realistic cost accounting procedures are needed to determine meal option pricing.

Let us now go through the steps of the attached formula to arrive at a price structure for various meal plan options.

Contract Meal Plan Costs

	7 Day 19/20/21 Meal B L D	7 Day 14 Meal B & D or L & D	% Cost Reduction From 19-21 Plan	5 Day 15 Meal B L D	% Cost Reduction From 19-21 Plan	5 Day 10 Meal Choice of 2 Meals	% Cost Reduction From 19-21 Plan
University of Arizona	$543	$466	14%	$405	25%	$340	37%
Stanford University	$785	$727	7%	-		$589	25%
UCLA	$1164	-		$1160	.3%	-	
University of Pacific	$860	$560	35%	$550	36%	$400	53.5%
University of North Cal	$570	$405	29%	-		-	
Yale University	$750	-		-		$549	27%
University of Florida	$676	-		$562	17%	-	
University of Miami	$565	-		$507	10%	-	
University of S. Florida	$591	-		$535	9.5%	$504	14.7%
University of Idaho	$600	-		-		$480	20%
Indiana University	$560	$530 L&D	5.4%	-		--	
University of Kentucky	$514	$461	10.3%	-		-	
University of Maine	$585	-		$535	8.6%	-	
University of Minn.	$696	$666 L&D	4.3%	$666	4.3%	-	
University of New Mexico	$624	$529	15.2%	-		-	
Duke University	$600	-		$510	15%	-	
N. Dakota State Univ.	$501	-		$453	9.6%	-	

	7 Day 19/20/21 Meal B L D	7 Day 14 Meal B&D or L & D	% Cost Reduction Brom 19-21 Plan	5 Day 15 Meal B L D	% Cost Reduction From 19-21 Plan	5 Day 10 Meal Choice of 2 Meals	% Cost Reduction From 19-21 Plan
Kent State University	$609	-		$450	26%	-	
University of Dayton	$253	-		$225	11%	-	
Oregon State University	$545	-		$496	9%	-	
University of Penn.	-	-		$580		$525 L&D	915%
Univ. of Rhode Island	$600	-		$530	11.7%	-	
Memphis State U.	$1195	-		$1175	1.7%	-	
University Of Tenn.	$555	-		$468	15.7%	-	
University of Washington	$525	$450	14.3%	-		$375	28.6%
University of Wisconsin	$500	[illegible]	-	-		$436	12.8%
Northwestern	$670	$600 L&D	10.5%	-		-	
Oklahoma State	$535	-		$440	17.*%	-	

Source: Contract Meal Plan Service, ACUHO Research and Information Committee, May, 1972.

July 31, 1972

Meal Plan Costing Formula
ACUHO 1972 John T. Pence

To determine cost of various meal plan options you should begin by knowing the food costs by each meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner), other variable costs, and fixed costs based on a break even operation.

Costs are broken down in the following categories:

1) Food Costs (variable)

2) Other Variable Costs
   Labor
   Supplies
   Laundry
   Equipment Repairs

3) Fixed Costs
   Utilities
   Debt Service
   Building Repair
   Depreciation
   Contractual Service
   Insurance
   Administration Costs

Steps to use to determine cost by meal option plan.

Step 1. Total fixed costs (use previous year as a guide, and adjust upwards for known increased costs).

$$\frac{\text{Total Fixed Costs}}{\text{Number of Contract Students}} = \text{Fixed Cost per Student on Contract}$$

Step 2 Determine variable costs, excluding food. Use previous year's expenses for a basis, adjusting labor for planned raises. Adjust other variable costs for known or projected increases for the coming year.

$$\frac{\text{Variable Costs}}{\text{Number of Served Meals}} = \text{Variable cost per meal served}$$

Step 3 Determine food cost by each meal category -i.e. - breakfast, lunch, dinner, based on previous years expenses.

$$\frac{\text{Total Breakfast Food Costs}}{\text{Total Number Breakfast Served}} = \text{Food Costs per Breakfast Served}$$

$$\frac{\text{Total Lunch Food Costs}}{\text{Total Number Lunches Served}} = \text{Food Cost per Lunch Served}$$

$$\frac{\text{Total Dinner Food Costs}}{\text{Total Number Dinners Served}} = \text{Food Cost per Dinner Served}$$

Step 4 To determine the combined costs for the various meal option plans, the % participation by meal for each of the plans must be conservatively estimated.

20 Meal Plan

Breakfast:
% Participation x (Food Cost per Breakfast Served + Variable cost per Meal Served) x Number of Operating Days = _____

Lunch:
% Participation x (Food Cost per Lunch Served + Variable Cost per Meal Served) x Number of Operating Days= _____

Dinner:
% Participation x (Food Cost per Dinner Served+ Variable Cost per Meal Served) x Number of Operating Days = _____

Total Variable Cost _____

Add Fixed Cost per Student _____

Total Cost 20 Meal Plan _____

15 Meal Plan

B % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

L % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

D % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

Total Variable Cost _____

Add Fixed Cost _____

Total Cost _____

14 Meal Plan

B % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

L % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

D % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

Total Variable Cost _____

Add Fixed Cost _____

Total Cost _____

10 Meal Plan

B or L % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

D % Participation x FC + VC x # of days = _____

Total Variable Cost _____

Add Fixed Cost _____

Total Cost _____

5 Meal Plan

% Participation x FC + VC x # of Days = _____

Add Fixed Cost _____

Total Cost _____

Note: FC: Food Cost Per Particular Meal Served
VC: Other Variable Costs Per Meal Served
# of Days: Number of Operating Days

MEAL OPTION COSTING FORMULA

SAMPLE MEAL SELECTION AND COSTS

BREAKFAST

Cold Cereal - one serving with milk

Orange Juice - 4 oz.

Bacon - two slices

Eggs - one

Toast - two slices

Butter - two pats

Milk - 8 oz.

Coffee - 1 cup

Breakfast Food Cost .28

LUNCH

Hamburger Patties (5/#) with Bun two servings

Potato Chips - 1 oz.

Tossed Salad - 1 cup

Soup - 6 oz.

Ice Cream Bar - one

Fruit Drink - 8 oz.

Milk - 8 oz.

Condiments

Lunch Food Costs .43

DINNER

Roast Beef - 3 oz.

Whipped Potatoes w/gravy - #12 disher, 1 oz. gravy

W.K. Corn - # 12 disher

Mixed Green Salad - 1 cup

Dinner Rolls - two

Dessert - one portion

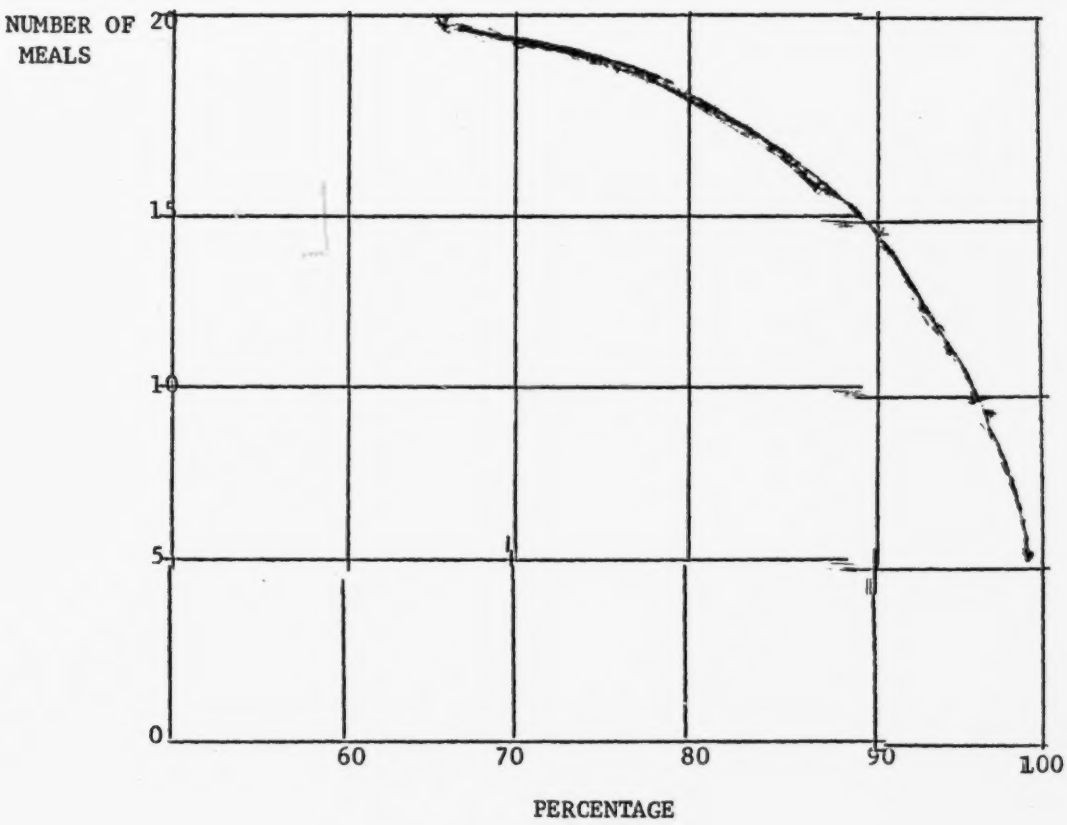
Milk - 8 oz.

Ice Tea - 8 oz.

Total Dinner Food Cost .80

Note: Based on costs at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas

PARTICIPATION RATE



Cost Formula Based on Guest Meal Prices

ACUHO 72 John T. Pence

Assuming that your guest meal prices accurately reflect your existing cost structure for meals served - and if you don't actually know your food costs by meal, you could test a proposed pricing scheme based on your guest meal prices.

	Potential Meal Total	% Participation	Meals Consumed per week
B	7	x	=
L	6	x	=
D	7	x	=

Meals Consumed per Week	Guest Meal Price	=	Guest Meal Cost of Meals Eaten on the Average
B _____	x$_____		$_____
L _____	x$_____		$_____
D _____	x$_____		$_____

TOTAL

$\frac{\$ \text{ Spent Breakfast}}{\$ \text{Total Spent}}$ = % Total $ Spent on Breakfast

$\frac{\$ \text{ Spent Lunch}}{\$ \text{ Total Spent}}$ = % Total $ Spent on Lunch

$\frac{\$ \text{ Spent Dinner}}{\$ \text{Total Spent}}$ = % Total $ Spent on Dinner

% Spent on Breakfast x Total Actual Income/Student - Actual Amount Spent on Breakfast

% Spent on Lunch x Total Income/Student - Actual Amount Spent on Lunch

% Spent on Dinner x Total Income/Student = Actual Amount Spent on Dinner

$\frac{\$ \text{ Amount Spent Breakfast}}{\text{Total Breakfasts Consumed}}$ = Cost per actual Breakfast Served

$\frac{\$ \text{ Amount Spent Lunch}}{\text{Total Lunch Consumed}}$ = Cost per actual Lunch Served

$\frac{\$ \text{ Amount Spent Dinner}}{\text{Total Dinners Consumed}}$ = Cost per actual Dinner Served

Hopefully this morning you have been able to learn a collection of meal plan option material that is up to date. Much work has been done by individual colleges and universities with very little of the background information, analysis of food systems, and solutions shared with one another.

There is no single answer to the question of whether to have a mandatory meal plan for your resident students or not. Housing and food service administrators must consider at least the following issues:

1. Does the institution have a considerable obligation financially for food service equipment and space which would be jeopardized by loosing students from meals and meal plans? If the answer to this is yes, is there other use for this space or equipment?

2. What is the overall opinion of resident students toward the food service and meal plans? Let the majority be heard.

3. Does the community surrounding the campus provide an adequate number of food service establishments to handle the students which would utilize these commercial businesses?

4. Will displaced food service workers be able to secure other employment if the residence hall food services are used less?

We are the food service experts on the campus. We must commit ourselves to providing meal service for our own particular residents to allow for flexibility, enhance student life in the residence halls and on campus yet provide a solvent operation - whether it be contract (one or more options), cash, alla carte, or use of meal ticket points - which has been practically eliminated from this report because it appeared no two campus situations were similiar. What a challenge for the 70's!

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Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois

Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana

British Columbia, University of, Vancouver, Canada

Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

California State College, Long Beach, California

California, University of, Santa Barbara, California

Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

Chico State College, Chico, California

Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa

Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois

Georgia, University of, Athens, Georgia

Idaho, University of, Moscow, Idaho

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiania

Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, Virginia

Miami, University of, Coral Gables, Florida

Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

New York State University, Canton, New York

Northwestern University, Evanston - Chicago, Illinois

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma

Oklahoma, University of, Norman, Oklahoma

Oregon State University, Corvalis, Oregon

Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania

Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana

Rochester, University of, Rochester, New York

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas

San Fernando Valley State College, Northridge, California

Stanford University, Stanford, California

Tennessee, University of, Knoxville, Tennessee

Toronto, University of, Toronto, Canada

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